

Common

Utopia Foucault
Friends Agamben
Affection Deleuze

Commune

Friend Nietzsche
Affinity Bonanno
Civil War Tiqqun
Communism Agamben

Communion

Care Precarias
a la Deriva
Friendship Foucault
Whatever Agamben
Love Cixious



Friendship
as a Form of Life

friends,
lets communize an idea:
friendship as a form of life.

When its use is common we can communicate,
conversations occur and perhaps, if this pleases us,
we will find each other; we will become powerful.

If we succeed, all of this will become evident.
The evident is what is held in common,
or what sets apart.

It is here that we begin:

lets be friends...
friendship.as.a.form.of.life@gmail.com
friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com

that can no longer be put in economic terms. Wherever she loves, all the old concepts of management are left behind. At the end of a more or less conscious computation, she finds not her sum but her differences.

I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant. When I write, it's everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love.

In one another we will never be lacking.

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COMMON

We have been sold this lie:
that what is most particular to us is
what distinguishes us from
the *common*.

We experience the contrary:
every singularity is felt in the
manner and in the intensity with
which a being brings into existence
something *common*.

At root it is here that we begin,
where we find *each other*.

In the beginning are our differences. The new love dares for the other, wants the other, makes dizzying, precipitous flights between knowledge and invention. The woman arriving over and over again does not stand still; she's everywhere, she exchanges, she is the desire-that-gives. (Not enclosed in the paradox of the gift that takes nor under the illusion of unitary fusion. We're past that.) She comes in, comes-in-between herself me and you, between the other me where one is always infinitely more than one and more than me, without the fear of ever reaching a limit; she thrills in our becoming. And we'll keep on becoming! She cuts through defensive loves, motherages, and devourations: beyond selfish narcissism, in the moving, open, transitional space, she runs her risks. Beyond the struggle-to-the-death that's been re- moved to the bed, beyond the love-battle that claims to represent exchange, she scorns at an Eros dynamic that would be fed by hatred. Hatred: a heritage, again, a remainder, a duping subservience to the phallus. To love, to watch-think-see the other in the other, to despecularize, to unhoard. Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life—a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies.

Wherever history still unfolds as the history of death, she does not tread. Opposition, hierarchizing exchange, the struggle for mastery which can end only in at least one death (one master-one slave, or two nonmasters = two dead)—all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values. The fact that this period extends into the present doesn't prevent woman from starting the history of life somewhere else. Elsewhere, she gives. She doesn't "know" what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance that she'll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out. She gives that there may be life, thought, transformation. This is an "economy"

of its predicates, its being such as it is. The lover desires the as only insofar as it is such—this is the lover's particular fetishism. Thus, whatever singularity (the Lovable) is never the intelligence of some thing, of this or that quality or essence, but only the intelligence of an intelligibility. The movement Plato describes as *erotic anamnesis* is the movement that transports the object not toward another thing or another place, but toward its own taking-place-toward the Idea.

Utopia

Foucault

This place that Proust slowly, anxiously comes to occupy anew every time he awakens: from that place, as soon as my eyes are open, I can no longer escape. Not that I am nailed down by it, since after all I can not only move, shift, but I can also move *it*, shift *it*, change *its* place. The only thing is this: I cannot move without it. I cannot leave it there where it is, so that I, myself may go elsewhere. I can go to the other end of the world; I can hide in the morning under the covers, make myself as small as possible. I can even let myself melt under the sun at the beach—it will always be there. Where I am. It is here, irreparably: it is never elsewhere. My body, it's the opposite of a utopia: that which is never under different skies. It is the absolute place, the little fragment of space where I am, literally, embodies. My body, pitiless place.

And what is by chance I lived with it, in a kind of worn familiarity, as with a shadow, or as with those everyday things that ultimately I no longer see, that life has ultimately grayed out, like those chimneys, those roofs that line the sky every night in front of my window? Still, every morning: same presence, same wounds. In front of my eyes the same unavoidable images are drawn, imposed by the mirror: thin face, slouching shoulders, myopic gaze, no more hair—not handsome at all. And it is in this ugly shell of my head, in this cage I do not like, that I will have to reveal myself and walk around; through this grill I must speak, look and be looked at; under this skin I will have to rot

My body: it is the place without recourse to which I am condemned. And actually I think that it is against this body (as if to erase it) that all these utopias have come into being. The prestige of utopia—to what does utopia owe its beauty, its marvel? Utopia is a place outside all places, but it is a place where I will have a body without body, a body that will be beautiful, limpid, transparent, luminous, speedy, colossal in its power, infinite in its duration. Untethered, invisible, protected—always transfigured. It may very well be that the first utopia, the one most deeply rooted in the hearts of men, is precisely the utopia of an incorporeal body.

The land of fairies, land of gnomes, of genies, magicians—well, it is the land where bodies transport themselves at the speed of light; it is the land where wounds are healed with marvelous beauty in the blink of an eye. It is the land where you can fall from a mountain and pick yourself up unscathed. It is the land where you're visible when you want, invisible when you desire. If there is a land of fairy tales, it is precisely so that I may be its prince charming, and that all the pretty boys there may turn nasty and hairy as bears.

There is also a utopia made for erasing bodies. This utopia is the land of the dead, those grand utopian cities that the Egyptian civilization left behind. What is a mummy, after all? Well, a mummy is the utopia of the body negated and transfigured. The mummy is the great utopian body that persists across time. There were also the golden masks that the Mycenaean civilization placed over the faces of defunct kings: utopia of their bodies, glorious, powerful and solar, of a terror disarmed. There have been paintings, sculptures, tombs, those reclining statues that, since the middle Ages, prolonged in immobility a youth that can no longer pass away. Nowadays there are those simple marble cubes, bodies geometricized in stone, regular figures of white on the great blackboard of cemeteries. And in this utopian city of the dead, suddenly my body becomes solid like a thing, eternal like a God.

But perhaps the most obstinate, the most powerful of those utopias with which we erase the sad topology of the body, has been, since the beginning of Western history, supplied to us by the great myth of the soul. The soul. It functions in my body in the most marvelous way: it resides there, of course, but it also knows how to escape. It escapes from the body to see things through the window of my eyes. It escapes to dream while I sleep, to survive when I die. It is beautiful, my soul: its is pure, it is white. And if my body—which is muddy, or in any case not very clean—should come to soil it, there will always be a virtue, there will always be a power, there will be a thousand sacred gestures that will reestablish my soul in its primary purity. It will last a long time, my soul, more than a "long time," when my old body made smooth, neutered, rounded like a soap bubble.

Whatever Agamben

The coming being is whatever being. In the Scholastic enumeration of transcendentals (*quodlibet ens est unum, verum, bonum seu perfectum*—what-ever entity is one, true, good, or perfect), the term that, remaining un-thought in each, conditions the meaning of all the others is the adjective *quodlibet*. The common translation of this term as "whatever" in the sense of "it does not matter which, indifferently" is certainly correct, but in its form the Latin says exactly the opposite: *Quodlibet ens* is not "being, it does not matter which," but rather "being such that it always matters." The Latin always already contains, that is, a reference to the will (*libet*). Whatever being has an original relation to desire.

The Whatever in question here relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is. Singularity is thus freed from the false dilemma that obliges knowledge to choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal. The intelligible, according to a beautiful expression of *Levi ben Gershon* (*Gersonides*), is neither a universal nor an individual included in a series, but rather "singularity insofar as it is whatever singularity." In this conception, such-and-such being is reclaimed from its having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class (the reds, the French, the Muslims) and it is reclaimed not for another class nor for the simple generic absence of any belonging, but for its being-such, for belonging itself. Thus being-such, which remains constantly hidden in the condition of belonging ("there is an x such that it belongs to y") and which is in no way a real predicate, comes to light itself: The singularity exposed as such is whatever you want, that is, lovable.

Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one with all

trench with the captain—all that implied a very intense emotional tie. It's not to say: "Ah, there you have homosexuality!" I detest that kind of reasoning. But no doubt you have there one of the conditions, not the only one, that has permitted this infernal life where for weeks guys floundered in the mud and shit, among corpses, starving for food, and were drunk the morning of the assault.

I would like to say, finally, that something well considered and voluntary like a magazine ought to make possible a homosexual culture, that is to say, the instruments for polymorphic, varied, and individually modulated relationships. But the idea of a program of proposals is dangerous. As soon as a program is presented, it becomes a law, and there's a prohibition against inventing. There ought to be an inventiveness special to situation like ours and to these feelings, this need that Americans call "coming out," that is, showing oneself. The program must be wide open. We have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such reason intelligible but not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces. To make a truly unavoidable challenge of the question: What can be played?

There you have it. My body, by virtue of these utopias, has disappeared. It has disappeared the way the flame of a candle is blown out. The soul, the tombs, the genies and the fairies have taken it in an underhanded way, made it disappear with sleight of hand, have blown out its heaviness, its ugliness, and have given it back to me, dazzling and perpetual.

But to tell the truth, my body will not be so easily reduced. It has, after all, itself, its own phantasmagoric resources. It, too, possesses some placeless places, and places more profound, more obstinate even than the soul, than the tomb, than the enchantment of magicians. It has its caves and its attics, it has its obscure abodes, its luminous beaches. My head, for example, my head: what a strange cavern that opens onto the external world with two windows. Two openings—I am sure of it, because I see them in the mirror, and also because I can close one or the other separately. And yet, there is really only one opening—since what I see facing me is only one continuous landscape, without partition or gap. What happens inside of this head? Well, things come to lodge themselves inside it. They enter—and I am certain that things enter my head when I look, because the sun, when it is too strong blinds me, rips right through to the back of my brain. And yet, these things that enter my head remain on the outside, since I see them in front of me, and in order to reach them I must come forward in turn.

Incomprehensible body, penetrable and opaque body, open and closed body, utopian body. Absolutely visible body, in one sense. I know very well what it is to be looked over by someone else from head to toe. I know what it is to be spied from behind, water over the shoulder, caught off guard when I least expect it. I know what it is to be naked. And yet this same body, which is so visible, is also withdrawn, captured by a kind of invisibility from which I can never really detach it. This skull, the back of my skull, I can feel it, right there, with my fingers. But see it? Never. This back, which I can feel leaning against the pressure of the mattress, against the couch when I am lying down, and which I might catch but only by ruse of the mirror. And what is this shoulder, whose movements and positions I know with precision, but that I will

never be able to see without dreadfully contorting myself? The body—phantom that only appears in the mirage of the mirror, and then only in fragmentary fashion—do I really need genies and fairies, and death and the soul, in order to be, at the same time, both visible and invisible? Besides, this body is light; it is transparent; it is imponderable. Nothing is less *thing* than my body: it runs, it acts, it lives, it desires. It lets itself be traversed, with no resistance, by all my intentions. Sure. But until the day when I hurt, when a pit is hollowed out of my belly, when My chest and throat chock up, block up, fill up with coughs. Until the day that a toothache crazes in the back of my mouth. And then, I cease to be light, imponderable, et cetera. I become thing . . . fantastic and ruminated architecture.

No, really, there is no need for magic, for enchantment. There's no need for a soul, nor a death, for me to be both transparent and opaque, visible and invisible, life and thing. For me to be a utopia, it is enough that I be a body. All those utopias by which I evaded my body—well they had, quite simply, their model and their first application, they had their place of origin, in my body itself, I really was wrong, before, to say that utopias are turned against the body and destined to erase it. They were born from the body itself, and perhaps afterwards they turned against it.

In any case, one thing is certain: that the human body is the principal actor in all utopias. After all, isn't one of the oldest utopias about which men have told themselves stories the dream of an immense and inordinate body that could devour space and master the world? This is the old utopia of giants that one finds at the heart of so many legends in Europe, in Africa, in Oceania, in Asia—this old legend that for so long fed the Western imagination, from Prometheus to Gulliver.

The body is also a great utopian actor when it comes to mask, makeup, to tattoo oneself, is not exactly (as one might imagine) to acquire an other body, only a bit more beautiful, better decorated, more easily recognizable. To tattoo oneself, to put on makeup or a mask, is probably something else: It is to place the body in communication with secret powers and invisible forces. The mask, the tattooed sign, the face-paint—they lay upon

Q. Women might object: What do men together have to win compared to the relations between a man and a woman or between two women?

A. There is a book that just appeared in the U.S. on the friendships between women. The affection and passion between women is well documented. In the preface, the author states that she began with the idea of unearthing homosexual relationships—but perceived that not only were these relationships not always present but that it was uninteresting whether relationships could be called “homosexual” or not. And by letting the relationship manifest itself as it appeared in words and gestures, other very essential things also appeared: dense, bright, marvelous loves and affections or very dark and sad loves. The book shows the extent to which woman's body has played a great role, and the importance of physical contact between women: women do each other's hair, help each other with make up, dress each other. Women have had access to the bodies of other women: they put their arms around each other, kiss each other. Man's body has been forbidden to other men in a much more drastic way. If it's true that life between women was tolerated, it's only in certain periods and since the nineteenth century that life between men not only was tolerated but rigorously necessary: very simply, during war, and equally in prison camps, you had soldiers and young officers who spent months and even years together. During World War I, men lived together completely, one on top of another, and for them it was nothing at all, insofar as death was present and finally the devotion to one another and the services rendered were sanctioned by the play of life and death. And apart from several remarks on camaraderie, the brotherhood of spirit, and some very partial observations, what do we know about these emotional uproars and storms of feeling that look place in those times? One can wonder how, in these absurd and grotesque wars and infernal massacres, the men managed to hold on in spite of everything. Through some emotional fabric, no doubt. I don't mean that it was because they were each other's lovers that they continued to fight; but honor, courage, not losing face, sacrifice, leaving the

become very important; one doesn't enter a relationship simply in order to be able to consummate it sexually, which happens very easily. But toward friendship, people are very polarized. How can a relational system be reached through sexual practices? Is it possible to create a homosexual mode of life? This notion of mode of life seems important to me. Will it require the introduction of a diversification different from the ones due to social class, differences in profession and culture, a diversification that would also be a form of relationship and would be a "way of life"? A way of life can be shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity. It can yield intense relations not resembling those that are institutionalized. It seems to me that a way of life can yield a culture and an ethics. To be "gay," I think, is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual but to try to define and develop a way of life.

Q. Isn't it a myth to say: Here we are enjoying the first fruits of a socialization between different classes, ages, and countries?

A. Yes, like the great myth of saying: There will no longer be any difference between homo- and heterosexuality. Moreover, I think that it's one of the reasons that homosexuality presents a problem today. Many sexual liberation movements project this idea of "liberating yourself from the hideous constraints that weigh upon you." Yet the affirmation that to be a homosexual is for a man to love another man—this search for a way of life runs counter to the ideology of the sexual liberation movements of the sixties. It's in this sense that the mustached "clones" are significant. It's a way of responding: "Have nothing to fear; the more one is liberated, the less one will love women, the less one will founder in this polysexuality where there are no longer any differences between the two." It's not at all the idea of a great community fusion. Homosexuality is a historic occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities: not so much through the intrinsic qualities of the homosexual but because the "slantwise" position of the latter, as it were, the diagonal lines he can lay out in the social fabric allow these virtualities to come to light.

the body an entire language, an entirely enigmatic language, an entire language that is ciphered, secret, sacred, which calls upon this body the violence of the God, the silent power of the Sacred, or the liveliness of Desire. The mask, the tattoo, the make-up: They place the body into an other space. They usher it into a place that does not take place in the world directly. They make of this body a fragment of imaginary space, which will communicate with the universe of divinities, or with the universe of the other, where one will be taken by the goods, or taken by the person one has just seduced. In any case the mask, the tattoo, the make-up, are operations by which the body is torn away from its proper space and projected into an other space.

And if one considers that clothing, sacred or profane, religious or civil, allows the individual to enter into the enclosed space of the monk, or into the invisible network of society, then one sees that everything that touches the body—drawings, colors, diadems, tiaras, clothes, uniforms, all that—lets the utopias sealed in the body blossom into sensible and colorful form. And perhaps, then, one should descend beneath the clothes—one should perhaps reach the flesh itself, and then one would see that in some cases even the body itself turns its own utopian power against itself, allowing all the space of the religious and the sacred, all the space of the other world, all the space of the counter world, to enter into the space that is reserved for it. So the body, then, in its materiality, in the flesh, would be like the product of its own phantasms. After all, isn't the body of the dancer precisely a body dilated along an entire space that is both exterior and interior to it? And the drugged, also? And the possessed? The possessed, whose bodies become hell; the stigmatized, whose bodies become suffering, redemption and salvation: a bloody paradise. Really, it was silly of me, before, to believe that the body was never elsewhere, that it was an irremediable *here*, and that it opposed itself to any utopia.

My body, in fact, is always elsewhere. It is tied to all the elsewheres of the world. And to tell the truth, it is *elsewhere* than in the world, because it is around it that things are arranged. It is in relation to *it*—and in relation to it as if in relation to a sovereign—that there is a below, an above, a right, a left, a forward and

a backward, a near and a far. The body is the zero point of the world. There, where paths and spaces come to meet, the body is nowhere. It is at the heart of the world, this small utopian kernel from which I dream, I speak, I proceed, I imagine, I perceive things in their place, and I negate them also by the indefinite power of the utopias I imagine. My body is like the City of the Sun. It has no place, but it is from it that all possible places, real or utopian, emerge and radiate.

After all, children take a long time to know that they have a body. For months, for more than a year, they only have a dispersed body of limbs, cavities, orifices. And all of this only gets organized, all of this gets literally embodied only in the image of the mirror. Stranger still is the way Homer's Greeks has no work to designate the unity of the body. As paradoxical as it may be, on the walls defended by Hector and his companions, facing Troy, there was no body. There were raised arms, there were brave chest, there were nimble legs, there were helmets shimmering atop heads—there was no body. The Greek work for "body" only appears in Homer to designate a corpse. It is this corpse, consequently, it is the corpse and it is the mirror that teach us—or at least that taught the Greeks then, and that teach children now—that we have a body, that this body has a form, that this form has an outline, that in this outline there is a thickness, a weight. In short, that the body occupies a place. It is the mirror and it is the corpse that assign a space to the profoundly and originally utopian experience of the body. It is the mirror and it is the corpse that silence, and appease, and shut into a closure (for us now sealed) this great utopian rage that dilapidates and volatilizes our bodies at ever instant. It is thanks to them, thanks to the mirror and to the corpse, that our body is not pure and simple utopia. And yet, if one considers that the image of the mirror resides for us in an inaccessible space, and that we will never be able to be where our corpse will be; if one thinks that the mirror and the corpse are themselves in an invincible elsewhere, then one discovers that only utopias can close in on themselves, and hide for an instant, the profound and sovereign utopia of our body.

But that individuals are beginning to love one another—there's the problem. The institution is caught in a contradiction; affective intensities traverse it which at one and the same time keep it going and shake it up. Look at the army, where love between men is ceaselessly provoked [*appele*] and shamed. Institutional codes can't validate these relations with multiple intensities, variable colors, imperceptible movements and changing forms. These relations sbort-circuit it and introduce love where there's supposed to be only law, rule, or habit.

Q. You were saying a little while ago: "Rather than crying about faded pleasures, I'm interested in what we ourselves can do." Could you explain that more precisely?

A. Asceticism as the renunciation of pleasure has bad connotations. But ascesis is something else: it's the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make the self appear which, happily, one never attains. Can that be our problem today? We've rid ourselves of asceticism. Yet it's up to us to advance into a homosexual ascesis that would make us work on ourselves and invent—I do not say discover—a manner of being that is still improbable.

Q. That means that a young homosexual must be very cautious in regard to homosexual imagery; he must work at something else?

A. What we must work on, it seems to me, is not so much to liberate our desires but to make ourselves infinitely more susceptible to pleasure [*plaisirs*]. We must escape and help others to escape the two readymade formulas of the pure sexual encounter and the lovers' fusion of identities.

Q. Can one see the first fruits of strong constructive relationships in the United States, in any case in the cities where the problem of sexual misery seems under control?

A. To me, it appears certain that in the United States, even if the basis of sexual misery still exists, the interest in friendship has

A. As far back as I remember, to want guys [*garçons*] was to want relations with guys. That has always been important for me, not necessarily in the form of a couple but as a matter of existence: how is it possible for men to be together? To live together, to share their time, their meals, their room, their leisure, their grief, their knowledge. their confidences? What is it to be “naked” among men, outside of institutional relations, family, profession, and obligatory camaraderie? It’s a desire, an uneasiness, a desire-in-uneasiness that exists among a lot of people.

Q. Can you say that desire and pleasure, and the relationships one can have, are dependent on one’s age?

A. Yes, very profoundly. Between a man and a younger woman, the marriage institution makes it easier: she accepts it and makes it work. But two men of noticeably different ages—what code would allow them to communicate? They face each other without terms or convenient words, with nothing to assure them about the meaning of the movement that carries them toward each other. They have to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they can give each other pleasure.

One of the concessions one makes to others is not to present homosexuality as anything but a kind of immediate pleasure, of two young men meeting in the street, seducing each other with a look, grabbing each other’s asses and getting each other off in a quarter of an hour. There you have a kind of neat image of homosexuality without any possibility of generating unease, and for two reasons: it responds to a reassuring canon of beauty, and it cancels everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship, things that our rather sanitized society can’t allow a place for without fearing the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force. I think that’s what makes homosexuality “disturbing”: the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself. To imagine a sexual act that doesn’t conform to law or nature is not what disturbs people.

Maybe it should also be said that to make love is to feel one’s body close in on oneself. It is finally to exist outside of any utopia, with all of one’s density, between the hands of the other. Under the other’s fingers running over you, all the invisible parts of your body begin to exist. Against the lips of the other, yours become sensitive. In front of his half-closed eyes, your face acquires a certitude. There is a gaze, finally, to see your closed eyelids. Love also, like the mirror and like death—it appeases the utopia of your body, it hushes it, it calms it, it encloses it as if in a box, it shuts and seals it. This is why love is so closely related to the illusion of the mirror and the menace of death. And if, despite these two perilous figures that surround it, we love so much to make love, it is because, in love, the body is *here*.

Friends Agamben

Friendship, our topic in this seminar, is so closely linked to the very definition of philosophy that one can say that without it, philosophy would not in fact be possible. The intimacy of friendship and philosophy is so deep that philosophy includes the *philos*, the friend, in its very name and, as is often the case with all excessive proximities, one risks not being able to get to the bottom of it. In the classical world, this promiscuity—and, almost, consubstantiality—of the friend and the philosopher was taken for granted, and it was certainly not without a somewhat archaizing intent that a contemporary philosopher—when posing the extreme question, ‘what is philosophy?’—was able to write that it was a question to be dealt with *entre amis*. Today the relation between friendship and philosophy has actually fallen into discredit, and it is with a sort of embarrassment and uneasy conscience that professional philosophers try to come to terms with such an uncomfortable and, so to speak, clandestine partner of their thought.

Many years ago, my friend Jean-Luc Nancy and I decided to exchange letters on the subject of friendship. We were convinced that this was the best way of approaching and almost ‘staging’ a problem which seemed otherwise to elude analytical treatment. I wrote the first letter and waited, not without trepidation, for the reply. This is not the place to try to understand the reasons—or, perhaps, misunderstandings—that caused the arrival of Jean-Luc’s letter to signify the end of the project. But it is certain that our friendship—which, according to our plans, should have given us privileged access to the problem—was instead an obstacle for us and was consequently, in a way, at least temporarily obscured.

Out of an analogous and probably conscious uneasiness, Jacques Derrida chose as the *Leitmotiv* of his book on friendship a sibylline motto, traditionally attributed to Aristotle, that negates friendship in the very gesture with which it seems to invoke it: *o philoi, oudeis philos*, “o friends, there are no friends.” One of the concerns of the book is, in fact, a critique of what

Friendship Foucault

Q. You’re in your fifties. You’re a reader of *Le Gai Pied*, which has been in existence now for two years. Is the kind of discourse you find there something positive for you?

A. That the magazine exists is the positive and important thing. In answer” to your question, I could say that I don’t have to read it to voice the question of my age. What I could ask of your magazine is that I do not, in reading it, have to pose the question of my age. Now, reading it...

Q. Perhaps the problem is the age group of those who contribute to it and read it; the majority are between twenty-five and thirty-five.

A. Of course. The more it is written by young people the more it concerns young people. But the problem is not to make room for one age group alongside another but to find out what can be done in relation to the quasi identification between homosexuality and the love among young people. Another thing to distrust is the tendency to relate the question of homosexuality to the problem of “Who am I?” and “What is the secret of my desire?” Perhaps it would be better to ask oneself, “What relations, through homosexuality, can be established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?” The problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one’s sex, but, rather, to use one’s sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships. And, no doubt, that’s the real reason why homosexuality is not a form of desire but something desirable. Therefore, we have to work at becoming homosexuals and not be obstinate in recognizing that we are. The development toward which the problem of homosexuality tends is the one of friendship.

Q. Did you think so at twenty, or have you discovered it over the years?

these positions, which when they are mediated by a labor relation remain even more fixed, because we want to think relations beyond those of the commodity mediations, following the logic of the gift, where one gives without knowing what, how, and when one will receive something in exchange.

Transversality: when we speak of care we refer to a notion with multiple dimensions. As we have already seen, there are remunerated and nonremunerated labor of care, blurring the false line that is persistently drawn between those who think themselves independent and crosses in an indissoluble form the material and the immaterial (relational, emotive, subjective, and sexual aspects) of our life, needs, and desires. Care takes place in commodity spheres and in those at the margins of the market, in the home and outside the home, combing a multitude of tasks and requirements for different specific knowledges. Care makes newly manifest that we cannot clearly delimit lifetime from work time, because the labor of care is precisely to manufacture life.

Everydayness: care is that continuous line that is always present, because if it were not we could not continue living, it only varies its intensity, its qualities, and its form of organization (more or less unfair, more or less ecological). We are speaking of the sustainability of life, that is to say, of everyday tasks of affective engineering that we propose to make visible and to revalorize as raw material for the political, because we do not want to think social justice without taking into account how to construct it in day-to-day situations.

Affective virtuosity, interdependence, transversality and everydayness constitute the key ingredients of a careful know-how, fruit of collective and corporeal knowledge, that breaks with the securitary logic and thus opens cracks in the walls of fear and precarization. But this is not a prescription for sacrificed women, but rather a line upon which to insist in order for radical transformation.

the author defines as the phallogocentric conception of friendship that dominates our philosophical and political tradition. While Derrida was still working on the seminar which gave birth to the book, we had discussed together a curious philological problem that concerned precisely the motto or witticism in question. One finds it cited by, amongst others, Montaigne and Nietzsche, who would have derived it from Diogenes Laertius. But if we open a modern edition of the *Lives of the Philosophers*, we do not find, in the chapter dedicated to the biography of Aristotle (V, 21), the phrase in question, but rather one almost identical in appearance, the meaning of which is nonetheless different and far less enigmatic: *oi philoi, oudeis philos*, “he who has (many) friends, has no friend.”

A library visit was enough to clarify the mystery. In 1616 the great Genevan philologist Isaac Casaubon decided to publish a new edition of the *Lives*. Arriving at the passage in question—which still read in the edition procured by his father-in-law Henry Etienne, *o philoi* (o friends)—he corrected the enigmatic version of the manuscripts without hesitation. It became perfectly intelligible and for this reason was accepted by modern editors.

Since I had immediately informed Derrida of the results of my research, I was astonished, when his book was published under the title *Politiques de l'amitié*, not to find there any trace of the problem. If the motto—apocryphal according to modern philologists—appeared there in its original form, it was certainly not out of forgetfulness: it was essential to the book's strategy that friendship be, at the same time, both affirmed and distrustfully revoked.

In this, Derrida's gesture repeated that of Nietzsche. While still a student of philology, Nietzsche had begun a work on the sources of Diogenes Laertius and the textual history of the *Lives* (and therefore also Casaubon's amendment) must have been perfectly familiar to him. But both the necessity of friendship and, at the same time, a certain distrust towards friends were essential to Nietzsche's strategy. This accounts for his recourse to the traditional reading, which was already, by Nietzsche's time, no longer current. (the Huebner edition of 1828 carries the modern version, “*legebatur o philoi, emendavit Casaubonus*”).

It is possible that the peculiar semantic status of the term 'friend' has contributed to the uneasiness of modern philosophers. It is well known that no-one has ever been able to explain satisfactorily the meaning of the syntagm: 'I love you', so much so that one might think that it has a performative character—that its meaning coincides, that is, with the act of its utterance. Analogous considerations could be made for the expression 'I am your friend', even if here a recourse to the performative category does not seem possible. I believe that 'friend' belongs instead to that class of terms which linguists define as non-predicative—terms, that is, on the basis of which it is not possible to construct a class of objects in which one might group the things to which one applies the predicate in question. 'White', 'hard' and 'hot' are certainly predicative terms; but is it possible to say that 'friend' defines, in this sense, a coherent class? Strange as it may seem, 'friend' shares this characteristic with another species of non-predicative terms: insults. Linguists have demonstrated that an insult does not offend the person who receives it because it places him in a particular category (for example, that of excrement, or of male or female sexual organs, depending on the language), which would simply be impossible or, in any case, false. The insult is effective precisely because it does not function as a constative utterance but rather as a proper name, because it uses language to name in a way that cannot be accepted by the person named, and from which he nevertheless cannot defend himself (as if someone were to persist in calling me Gaston even though my name is Giorgio). What offends in the insult is, to be precise, a pure experience of language, and not a reference to the world.

If this is true, 'friend' would share this condition not only with insults, but with philosophical terms: terms which, as is well known, do not have an objective denotation and which, like those terms Medieval logicians labelled 'transcendent', simply signify existence.

For this reason, before getting to the heart of our seminar, I would like you to observe carefully the reproduction of the painting by Serodine which you see before you. The painting, kept in the Galleria nazionale di arte antica in Rome, depicts

its object is trying to maintain an order that perpetuates the confusion between being in a situation of risk or vulnerability and being dangerous. To carry out this task of containment, new social agents proliferate, like private security companies and NGOs, which live alongside the old dispositifs - the State security bodies and the disciplinary institutions continue playing their role. In the face of this prevailing logic, our wager consists in recuperating and reformulating the feminist proposal for a logic of care. A care that appears here as a mode of taking charge of bodies opposed to the securitary logic, because, in place of containment, it seeks the sustainability of life and, in place of fear, it bases itself on cooperation, interdependence, the gift, and social ecology. Seeking a definition of care, we identify four key elements:

Affective virtuosity: this is a matter of a criterion of social ecology, which breaks with the idea that care happen because someone loves you and presents it more as an ethical element that mediates every relation. This affective virtuosity has to do with empathy, with intersubjectivity, and contains an essential creative character, constitutive of life and the part of labor (nonremunerated as much as remunerated) that cannot be codified. What escapes the code situates us in that which is not yet said, opens the terrain of the thinkable and livable, it is that which creates relationships. We have to necessarily take into account this affective component in order to unravel the politically radical character of care, because we know - this time without a doubt - that the affective is the effective.

Interdependence: we take as our point of departure the recognition of the multiple dependence that is given among the inhabitants of this planet and we count social cooperation as an indispensable tool for enjoying it. The task of politicizing care leads to opening the concept and analyze the concepts that compose it: economically remunerated care, nonremunerated care, self-care and those activities that assure the sustainability of life. People depend on each other, these positions are not static and it is not only "the others" that need care. The proposal consists in destabilizing

Care

Precarias a la Deriva

*Care, with its ecological logic,
opposes the securitary logic reigning in the precaritized world.*

The present context is marked by the conjunction of macropolitics of security and their everyday correlate, the micropolitics of fear. At the grand scale we observe how the western governments justify the application of these securitary policies as a response to the present geopolitical configuration, strongly marked by the “terrorist threat.” These macropolitics articulate themselves day to day with the micropolitics of fear, directly related to the deregularization of the labor market and the instability that this generates. Simultaneously, consumption tries to impose itself as the sole remnant of public activity and public spaces organized around other axes disappear. The securitary triumphs as a way of taking charge of bodies and filtering them into the distinct strata of our societies. In this context of uncertainty and deterritorialization, precarity is not only a characteristic of the poorest workers. Today we can speak of a precarization of existence in order to refer to a tendency that traverses all of society, which feeds and feeds upon the climate of instability and fear. Precarity functions as a blackmail, because we are susceptible to losing our jobs tomorrow even though we have indefinite contracts, because hiring, mortgages, and prices in general go up but our wages don't, because social networks are very deteriorated and the construction of community today is a complicated task, because we don't know who will care for us tomorrow... The logic of security founds itself in fear, concretizes itself in practices of containment, and generates isolation that persists in present social problems as individual ones. Practices of containment cast the subjects that need care and rights either into poor victims or into subjects dangerous for the rest of “normalized” society, which has been subjected and controlled in well-established niches. In the present situation of cutting back rights, social measures diminish, the focus is fundamentally assistance-ist and controlling, and

the encounter of the apostles Peter and Paul on the road to martyrdom. The two saints, motionless, occupy the centre of the canvas, surrounded by the disorderly gesticulation of the soldiers and executioners who are leading them to their death. Critics have often drawn attention to the contrast between the heroic rigour of the two apostles and the commotion of the crowd, lit up here and there by flecks of light sketched almost randomly on the arms, the faces, the trumpets. For my part, I think that what makes this painting truly incomparable is that Serodine has portrayed the two apostles so close together—with their foreheads almost glued one to the other—that they are absolutely unable to see each other. On the road to martyrdom, they look at, without recognizing, each other. This impression of an excessive proximity, as it were, is accentuated by the silent gesture of shaking hands at the bottom of the picture, scarcely visible. It has always seemed to me that this painting contains a perfect allegory of friendship. What is friendship, in effect, if not a proximity such that it is impossible to make for oneself either a representation or a concept of it? To recognize someone as a friend means not to be able to recognize him as ‘something’. One cannot say ‘friend’ as one says ‘white’, ‘Italian’, ‘hot’,—friendship is not a property or quality of a subject.

But it is time to begin a reading of the Aristotelian passage upon which I intended to comment. The philosopher dedicates to friendship a veritable treatise, which occupies the eighth and ninth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Since we are dealing with one of the most celebrated and discussed texts in the entire history of philosophy, I will take for granted a knowledge of its most well-established theses: that one cannot live without friends, that it is necessary to distinguish between friendship founded on utility and on the pleasure of virtuous friendship (in which the friend is loved as such), that it is not possible to have many friends, that friendship at a distance tends to result in oblivion, etc. All this is very well known. There is, however, a passage of the treatise which appears to me not to have received sufficient attention, although it contains, so to speak, the ontological basis of the theory. The passage is 1170a 28—171b35:

And if the one who sees perceives (*aisthanetai*) that he sees, the one who hears perceives that he hears, the one who walks perceives that he walks, and similarly in the other cases there is something that perceives that we are in activity (*oti energoumen*), so that if we perceive, it perceives that we perceive, and if we think, it perceives that we think; and if perceiving that we perceive or think is perceiving that we exist (for as we said, existing [*to einai*] is perceiving or thinking); and if perceiving that one is alive is pleasant (*edeon*) in itself (for being alive is something naturally good, and perceiving what is good as being there in oneself is pleasant); and if being alive is desirable, and especially so for the good, because for them existing is good, and pleasant (for concurrent perception [*synaisthanomenoi*] of what is in itself good, in themselves, gives them pleasure); and if, as the good person is to himself, so he is to his friend (since the friend is another self [*heteros autos*]) then just as for each his own existence (*to auton einai*) is desirable, so his friend's is too, or to a similar degree. But as we saw, the good man's existence is desirable because of his perceiving himself, that self being good; and such perceiving is pleasant in itself. In that case, he needs to be concurrently perceiving his friend – that he exists, too—and this will come about in their living together, conversing and sharing (*koinonein*) their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by “living together” where human beings are concerned, not feeding in the same location as with grazing animals.

[. . .]

For friendship is community, and as we are in relation to ourselves, so we are in relation to a friend. And, since the perception of our own existence (*aisthesis oti estin*) is desirable, so too is that of the existence of a friend.

We are dealing with an extraordinarily dense passage, since Aristotle enunciates here some theses of first philosophy that are not encountered in this form in any of his other writings:

COMMUNION

For *friendship is communion*, and as we are in relation to *ourselves*, so we are in relation to a *friend*. And, since the perception of our own existence is desirable, so too is that of the existence of a friend.

so long ago that we don't even remember. Not in a past, therefore - we do not have any records of it. Rather, the unfulfilled dreams and desires of humanity are the patient limbs of the resurrection, always ready to reawaken on the last day. And they don't sleep enclosed in rich mausoleums, but are fixed like living stars in the farthest heaven of language whose constellations we can barely make out. And this, at least, we didn't dream. To know how to grasp the stars that fall from the never dreamt-of firmament of humanity is the task of communism

1. There is a pure perception of being, an *aisthesis* of existence. Aristotle repeats this a number of times, mobilising the technical vocabulary of ontology: *aisthanometha oti esmen*, *aisthesis oti estin*: the *oti estin* is existence, the *quod est* as opposed to the essence (*quid est, oti estin*).

2. This perception of existing is, in itself, pleasant.

3. There is an equivalence between being and living, between awareness of one's existing and awareness of one's living. This is decidedly an anticipation of the Nietzschean thesis according to which: "Being: we have no other experience of it than 'to live'."

4. Inherent in this perception of existing is another perception, specifically human, which takes the form of a concurrent perception (*synaisthanesthai*) of the friend's existence. *Friendship is the instance of this concurrent perception of the friend's existence in the awareness of one's own existence*. But this means that friendship also has an ontological and, at the same time, a political dimension. The perception of existing is, in fact, always already divided up and shared or con-divided. Friendship names this sharing or con-division. There is no trace here of any inter-subjectivity—that chimera of the moderns—nor of any relation between subjects: rather, existing itself is divided, it is non-identical to itself: the I and the friend are the two faces—or the two poles—of this con-division.

5. The friend is, for this reason, another self, a *heteros autos*. In its Latin translation, *alter ego*, this expression has a long history, which this is not the place to reconstruct. But it is important to note that the Greek formulation is expressive of more than a modern ear perceives in it. In the first place, Greek, like Latin, has two terms to express otherness: *allos* (Lat. *alius*) is a generic otherness, while *heteros* (Lat. *alter*) is otherness as an opposition between two, as heterogeneity. Furthermore, the Latin *ego* does not exactly translate *autos*, which signifies 'oneself'. The friend is not another I, but an otherness immanent in self-ness, a becoming other of the self. At the point at which I perceive my existence as pleasant, my perception is traversed by a concurrent perception that dislocates it and departs it towards the friend, towards the other self. Friendship is this de-subjectivization at the very heart of the most intimate perception of self.

At this point, the ontological dimension in Aristotle can be taken for granted. Friendship belongs to the *prote philosophia*, because that which is in question in it concerns the very experience, the very 'perception' of existing. One understands then why 'friend' cannot be a real predicate, one that is added to a concept to inscribe it in a certain class. In modern terms, one might say that 'friend' is an existential and not a categorical. But this existential—which, as such, is unable to be conceptualized—is nonetheless intersected by an intensity that charges it with something like a political potency. This intensity is the 'syn', the 'con-' which divides, disseminates and renders con-divisible—in fact, already always con-divided—the very perception, the very pleasantness of existing.

That this con-division might have, for Aristotle, a political significance, is implicit in the passage of the text we have just analysed and to which it is opportune to return. In that case, he needs to be concurrently perceiving his friend – that he exists, too – and this will come about in their living together, conversing and sharing (*koinonein*) their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by "living together" where human beings are concerned, not feeding in the same location as with grazing animals. The expression translated as "feeding in the same location" is *en to auto nemesthai*. But the verb *nemo*—which as you know, is rich with political implications (it is enough to think of the deverbative *nomos*)—in the middle voice also means 'to partake', and the Aristotelian expression could mean simply 'to partake of the same'. It is essential, in any case, that human community should here be defined, in contrast to that of animals, through a cohabitation (*synzen* here takes on a technical meaning) which is not defined by participating in a common substance but by a purely existential con-division and, so to speak, one without an object: friendship, as concurrent perception of the pure fact of existence. How this original political *synaesthesia* could become, in the course of time, the consensus to which democracies entrust their fates in this latest extreme and exhausted phase of their evolution is, as they say, another story, and one upon which I shall leave you to reflect.

Porn has in this the austerity of classical literature: there must be no space for surprise, and talent consists in imperceptible variations on one mythic theme. And here the second essential characteristic of porn unveils itself; the happiness shown is always anecdotal, always a story, a moment seized on, an never a natural condition or something taken for granted: the naturalism that merely does away with clothes has always been the most relentless adversary of porn; just as a porn film without a sexual act would make no sense, the simple motionless display of man's natural sexuality can hardly be defined as pornographic. To demonstrate that the potential for happiness is present in every least moment of daily life wherever there is human society: this is the eternal political justification of porn. But its truth content, which sets it at the opposite pole from the naked bodies which crowd fin de siecle monumental art, is that pornography does not elevate the everyday world to the everlasting heaven of pleasure, but rather shows the unremediably episodic character of every pleasure – the inner aimlessness of every universal. This is why it is only in representing the pleasure of the woman, inscribed solely in her face, that porn achieves its intention. What would the characters in the porn film we are watching say if they in turn could be the spectators of our lives? Our dreams cannot see us – this is the tragedy of utopia. The exchange between character and reader – a good rule for all reading – ought to also function here. Except that what is important is not so much that we learn to live our dreams, but that they learn to read our lives.

It will seem, then, that the world has possessed for a long long time the dream of a thing of which it must only possess the awareness in order to truly possess." Well and good – but how are dreams possessed, where are they kept? Naturally it is not a matter here of fulfilling something; nothing is more boring than a man who has fulfilled his own dreams: this is the insipid social democratic zealotry of porn. But neither is it a matter of carefully keeping in chambers of alabaster, untouchable and garlanded with jasmine and roses, ideals that would crumble on coming things: this is the secret cynicism of the dreamer. Bazlen said: what we have dreamed, we have had already – a long time ago;

Communism

Agamben

In pornography, the utopia of a classless society displays itself though gross caricatures of those traits that distinguish classes and their transfiguration in the sexual act. Nowhere else, not even in a carnival's masquerade, does one find such a stubborn insistence on class markers in dress at the very moment that the situation both transgresses and nullifies them in the most incongruous of ways. The starched caps and aprons of maids, the worker's overalls, the butler's white gloves and striped waistcoat, and more recently, even the smocks and half masks of nurses, all celebrate their apotheosis at the moment in which, set like strange amulets on inextricably tangled naked bodies, they seem to trumpet forth that last on which they are to appear as the emblems of a community we can still barely glimpse. The only thing similar in the ancient world are the representations of the amorous relations between men and gods, an inexhaustible source of inspiration for classical art in its decline. In sexual union with a god, the overwhelmed and happy mortal suddenly cancels the infinite distance separating him from the heavenly ones; but at the same time, this distance is re-established, though in reverse, in the animal metamorphosis of the god. The guileless muzzle of the bull that bears Europa away, the sharp beak of the swan poised over Leda's face- these are the signs of a promiscuity so intimate and heroic as to be, for a little while yet, intolerable. If we look for the truth content of pornography, it immediately displays its artless and insipid claim to happiness. The essential character of this happiness is that it be enactable at any time or place: whatever the initial situation, it must inevitably end up in a sexual relation. A pornographic film in which by some mischance this didn't happen would, perhaps, be a masterpiece, but it would no longer be a pornographic film. The striptease is, in this sense, the model of every porn plot. Always and without exception they start with people in any old situation wearing clothes and the only space left to the unforeseen is the way in which they must come together, stripped, at the end.

Affection

Deleuze

What is an affection (*affectio*)? I see your faces literally fall... yet this is all rather amusing. At first sight, and to stick to the letter of Spinoza's text, this has nothing to do with an idea, but it has nothing to do with an affect either. Affect (*affectus*) was determined as the continuous variation of the power of acting. An affection is what? In a first determination, an affection is the following: it's a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body. What does this mean? "I feel the sun on me," or else "A ray of sunlight falls upon you"; it's an affection of your body. What is an affection of your body? Not the sun, but the action of the sun or the effect of the sun on you. In other words an effect, or the action that one body produces on another, once it's noted that Spinoza, on the basis of reasons from his Physics, does not believe in action at a distance, action always implies a contact, and is even a mixture of bodies. *Affectio* is a mixture of two bodies, one body which is said to act on another, and the other receives the trace of the first. Every mixture of bodies will be termed an affection. Spinoza infers from this that *affectio*, being defined as a mixture of bodies, indicates the nature of the modified body, the nature of the affectionate or affected body, the affection indicates the nature of the affected body much more than it does the nature of the affecting body. He analyses his famous example, "I see the sun as a flat disk situated at a distance of three hundred feet." That's an *affectio*, or at very least the perception of an *affectio*. It's clear that my perception of the sun indicates much more fully the constitution of my body, the way in which my body is constituted, than it does the way in which the sun is constituted. I perceive the sun in this fashion by virtue of the state of my visual perceptions. A fly will perceive the sun in another fashion.

In order to preserve the rigor of his terminology, Spinoza will say that an *affectio* indicates the nature of the modified body rather than the nature of the modifying body, and it envelopes the nature of the modifying body. I would say that the first sort of ideas for Spinoza is every mode of thought which represents

an affection of the body...which is to say the mixture of one body with another body, or the trace of another body on my body will be termed an idea of affection. It's in this sense that one could say that it is an affection-idea, the first type of ideas. And this first type of ideas answers to what Spinoza terms the first kind of knowledge [*connaissance*], the lowest.

Why is it the lowest? It's obvious that it's the lowest because these ideas of affection know [*connaissent*] things only by their effects: I feel the affection of the sun on me, the trace of the sun on me. It's the effect of the sun on my body. But the causes, that is, that which is my body, that which is the body of the sun, and the relation between these two bodies such that the one produces a particular effect on the other rather than something else, of these things I know [*sais*] absolutely nothing. As long as I remain in the perception of affection, I know nothing of it. One could say that affection-ideas are representations of effects without their causes, and it's precisely these that Spinoza calls inadequate ideas. These are ideas of mixture separated from the causes of the mixture.

You understand the difference between a notion-idea and an affection-idea. A notion-idea is inevitably adequate since it's a knowledge [*connaissance*] by causes. Spinoza not only uses the term notion here to qualify this second sort of idea, but he also uses the term *common notion*. The word is quite ambiguous: does it mean common to all minds? Yes and no, it's very meticulous in Spinoza. In any case, don't ever confuse a common notion and an abstraction. He always defines a common notion like this: it's the idea of something which is common to all bodies or to several bodies—at least two—and which is common to the whole and to the part. Therefore there surely are common notions which are common to all minds, but they're common to all minds only to the extent that they are first the idea of something which is common to all bodies. Therefore these are not at all abstract notions. There are also common notions which designate something common to two bodies or to two souls, for example, someone I love. Once again the common notion is not abstract, it has nothing to do with species or genera, it's actually the statement [*ÊnoncÊ*] of what is common to several bodies or to all bodies; or, since there's no single body which is not itself made up of several, one can say that

be grasped by connecting the dots between historical summits, but by following a low-level, unbroken, existential sequence.

Gloss: If the end of the Middle Ages is sealed by the splitting of the ethical element into two autonomous spheres, morality and politics, the end of "Modern Times" is marked by the reunification of these two abstract domains—as *separate*. This reunification gave us our new tyrant: the social.

29. *Naming* can take two mutually hostile forms. One wards something off, the other embraces it. Empire speaks of "civil wars" just as the Modern State did, but it does so in order to better control the masses of those who will give anything to avert civil war. I myself speak of "civil war," and even refer to it as a foundational fact. But I speak of civil war in order to embrace it and *to raise it to its highest forms*. In other words: according to my taste.

30. I call "communism" the real movement that elaborates, everywhere and at every moment, civil war.

my power to grow, implies that I confront him, that I undermine his forces.

Gloss: This was the brilliant reply of Hannah Arendt to a Zionist who, after the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and during the subsequent scandal, reproached her for not loving the people of Israel: "I don't love peoples. I only love my friends."

26. What is at stake in confronting the enemy is never its existence, only its power, its potentiality.

Not only can an annihilated enemy no longer recognize its own defeat, it always ends up coming back to *haunt* us, first as a ghost and later as *hostis*.

27. All differences among forms-of-life are *ethical* differences. These differences authorize play, in *all* its forms. These kinds of play are not political in themselves, but become political at a certain level of intensity, that is, when they have been *elaborated to a certain degree*.

Gloss: We reproach this world not for going to war too ferociously, nor for trying to prevent it by all means; we only reproach it for reducing war *to its most empty and worthless forms*.

28. I am not going to demonstrate the permanence of civil war with a starry-eyed celebration of the most beautiful episodes of social war, or by cataloguing all those moments when class antagonism achieved its finest expressions. I am not going to talk about the English, Russian or French revolutions, the Makhnovshchina, the Paris Commune, Gracchus Babeuf, May '68 or even the Spanish Civil War. Historians will be grateful: their livelihoods aren't threatened. My method is more twisted. I will show *how* civil war continues even when it is said to be absent or provisionally brought under control. My task will be to display the means used by the relentless process of depoliticization that begins in the Middle Ages and continues up to today, just when, as we all know, "everything is political" (Marx). In other words, the whole will not

there are common things or common notions in each body.

And in effect, the fact that, at the level of affection-ideas, we have only inadequate and confused ideas is well understood for what are affection-ideas in the order of life? And doubtless, alas, many among us who have not done enough philosophy live only like that. Once, only once, Spinoza employs a Latin word which is quite strange but very important: *occursus*. Literally this is the *encounter*. To the extent that I have affection-ideas I live chance encounters: I walk in the street, I see Pierre who does not please me, it's the function of the constitution of his body and his soul and the constitution of my body and my soul. Someone who displeases me, body and soul, what does that mean? I would like to make you understand why Spinoza has had such a strong reputation for materialism even though he never ceases to speak of the mind and the soul, a reputation for atheism even though he never ceases to speak of God, it's quite curious. One sees quite well why people have said that this is purely materialist. When I say "This one does not please me," that means, literally, that the effect of his body on mine, the effect of his soul on mine affects me disagreeably, it is the mixture of bodies or mixture of souls. There is a noxious mixture or a good mixture, as much at the level of the body as at that of the soul.

But what is a body? The theory of what a body or even a soul is, which comes down to the same thing, is found in book two of the *Ethics*. For Spinoza, the individuality of a body is defined by the following: it's when a certain composite or complex relation of movement and rest is preserved through all the changes which affect the parts of the body. It's the permanence of a relation of movement and rest through all the changes which affect all the parts, taken to infinity, of the body under consideration. You understand that a body is necessarily composite to infinity. My eye, for example, my eye and the relative constancy of my eye are defined by a certain relation of movement and rest through all the modifications of the diverse parts of my eye; but my eye itself, which already has an infinity of parts, is one part among the parts of my body, the eye in its turn is a part of the face and the face, in its turn, is a part of my body, etc....thus you have all sorts of relations which will be combined with one another to form an

individuality of such and such degree. But at each one of these levels or degrees, individuality will be defined by a certain relation composed of movement and rest.

What can happen if my body is made this way, a certain relation of movement and rest which subsumes an infinity of parts? Two things can happen: I eat something that I like, or else another example, I eat something and collapse, poisoned. Literally speaking, in the one case I had a good encounter and in the other I had a bad one. All this is in the category of *occursus*. When I have a bad encounter, this means that the body which is mixed with mine destroys my constituent relation, or tends to destroy one of my subordinate relations. For example, I eat something and get a stomach ache which does not kill me; this has destroyed or inhibited, compromised one of my sub-relations, one of the relations that compose me. Then I eat something and I die. This has decomposed my composite relation, it has decomposed the complex relation which defined my individuality. It hasn't simply destroyed one of my subordinate relations which composed one of my sub-individualities, it has destroyed the characteristic relation of my body. And the opposite happens when I eat something that agrees with me.

Spinoza asks, what is evil? We find this in his correspondence, in the letters he sent to a young Dutchman who was as evil as can be. This Dutchman didn't like Spinoza and attacked him constantly, demanding of him, "Tell me what you think evil is." You know that at that time, letters were very important and philosophers sent many of them. Spinoza, who is very very good-natured, believes at first that this is a young man who wants to be taught and, little by little, he comes to understand that this is not the case at all, that the Dutchman wants his skin. From letter to letter, the good Christian Blyenberg's anger swells and he ends by saying to Spinoza, "But you are the devil!" Spinoza says that evil is not difficult, evil is a bad encounter.

Encountering a body which mixes badly with your own. Mixing badly means mixing in conditions such that one of your subordinate or constituent relations is either threatened, compromised or even destroyed. More and more gay, wanting to

23. Hostility distances me from my own power.

24. Between the extremes of community and hostility lies the sphere of friendship and enmity. Friendship and enmity are ethico-political concepts. That they both give rise to an intense circulation of affects only demonstrates that affective realities are works of art, that the play between forms-of-life can be *elaborated*.

Gloss α: In the stockpile of instruments deployed by the West against all forms of community, one in particular has occupied, since around the twelfth century, a privileged and yet unsuspected place. I am speaking of the concept of *love*. We should acknowledge that the false alternative it has managed to impose on everything—"do you love me, or not?"—has been incredibly effective in masking, repressing, and crushing the whole gamut of highly differentiated affects and all the crisply defined degrees of intensity that can arise when bodies come into contact. In this set of false alternatives, love has functioned as a way to reduce the extreme possibility of an elaborate working out of the play among forms-of-life. Undoubtedly, the ethical poverty of the present, which amounts to a kind of permanent coercion into coupledness, is due largely to this concept of love.

Gloss β: To give proof, it would be enough to recall how, through the entire process of "civilization," the criminalization of all sorts of passions accompanied the sanctification of love as the one true passion, as the passion par excellence.

Gloss γ: All this of course goes only for the notion of love, not for all those things it has given rise to, despite itself. I am speaking not only of certain momentous perversions, but also of that little projectile "I love you," which is *always* an event.

25. I am bound to the friend by some experience of election, understanding or *decision* that implies that the growth of his power entails the growth of my own. Symmetrically, I am bound to the enemy by election, only this time a disagreement that, in order for

21. Hostility is practiced in many ways, by different methods and with varied results. The commodity or contractual relation, slander, rape, insult, and pure and simple destruction all take their places side-by-side as practices of *reduction*: even they understand this. Other forms of hostility take more perverse and less obvious paths. Consider potlatch, praise, politeness, prudence or even hospitality. These are all what one rarely recognizes as so many practices of *abasement*, as indeed they are.

Gloss: In his *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Benveniste was incapable of explaining why the Latin word *hostis* could simultaneously signify “foreigner,” “enemy,” “host,” “guest,” and “he who has the same rights as the Roman people,” or even, “he who is bound to me through potlatch,” i.e. the *forced* reciprocity of the gift. It is nevertheless clear that whether it be the sphere of law, the laws of hospitality, flattening someone beneath a pile of gifts or an armed offensive, there are many ways to *erase* the *hostis*, of making sure he does not become a singularity for me. That is how I keep the *hostis* foreign. It is our weakness that keeps us from admitting this. The third article of Kant’s *Towards Perpetual Peace*, which proposes the conditions for a final dissolution of particular communities and their subsequent formal reintegration into a Universal State, is nevertheless unequivocal in insisting that “Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal *hospitality*” And just recently, didn’t Sebastian Roché, that unacknowledged creator of the idea of “incivility” and French fanatic of zero tolerance, that hero of the impossible Republic, didn’t he give his most recent (March 2000) book the Utopian title *The Society of Hospitality*? Does Sebastian Roché read Kant, Hobbes and the pages of *France-Soir*, or does he simply read the mind of the French Interior Minister?

22. Anything we usually blanket with the name “indifference” does not exist. If I do not know a form- of-life and if it is therefore nothing to me, then I am *not even indifferent* to it. If I do know it and it exists for me as if it did not exist, it is in this case quite simply and clearly *hostile* for me.

show that he is right, Spinoza analyzes the example of Adam in his own way. In the conditions in which we live, we seem absolutely condemned to have only one sort of idea, affection-ideas. By means of what miracle could one move away from these actions of bodies that do not wait for us in order to exist, how could one rise to a knowledge [*connaissance*] of causes? For the moment we see clearly that all that is given to us is ideas of affection, ideas of mixture. For the moment we see clearly that since birth we have been condemned to chance encounters, so things aren’t going well. What does this imply? It already implies a fanatical reaction against Descartes since Spinoza will affirm strongly, in book two, that we can only know [*connaître*] ourselves and we can only know external bodies by the affections that the external bodies produce on our own. For those who can recall a little Descartes, this is the basic anti-cartesian proposition since it excludes every apprehension of the thinking thing by itself, that is it excludes all possibility of the *cogito*. I only ever know the mixtures of bodies and I only know myself by way of the action of other bodies on me and by way of mixtures.

This is not only anti-cartesianism but also anti-Christianity, and why? Because one of the fundamental points of theology is the immediate perfection of the first created man, which is what’s called in theology the theory of Adamic perfection. Before he sinned, Adam was created as perfect as he could be, so then the story of his sin is precisely the story of the Fall, but the Fall presupposes an Adam who is perfect insofar as he is a created thing. Spinoza finds this idea very amusing. His idea is that this isn’t possible; supposing that one is given the idea of a first man, one can only be given this idea as that of the most powerless being, the most imperfect there could be since the first man can only exist in chance encounters and in the action of other bodies on his own. Thus, in supposing that Adam exists, he exists in a mode of absolute imperfection and inadequacy, he exists in the mode of a little baby who is given over to chance encounters, unless he is in a protected milieu—but I’ve said too much. What would that be, a protected milieu?

COMMUNE

Communism can only take the form of a collection of acts of *communization*, of *making common* such-and-such space, such-and-such machine, such-and-such knowledge. That is to say, the elaboration of the mode of sharing that attaches to them.

Insurrection itself is just an accelerator, a decisive moment in this process.

Gloss: Every community is both *an actuality and a potentiality*. When it claims to be completely realized, as in Total Mobilization, or remain pure potentiality, as in the heavenly solitude of Bloom—*there is no community*.

16. When I encounter a body affected by the same form-of-life as I am, this is community, and it puts me in *contact* with my own power.

17. *Sense* is the element of the Common, that is, every event, as an irruption of sense, institutes a common.

The body that says “I,” in truth says “we.”

A gesture or statement endowed with sense carves a *determined* community out of a mass of bodies, a community that must itself be taken on in order to take on this gesture or statement.

18. When two bodies animated by forms-of-life that are absolutely foreign to one another meet at a certain moment and in a certain place, they experience *hostility*. This type of encounter gives rise to no relation; on the contrary, it bears witness to the original absence of relation.

The hostis can be identified and its situation can be known, but it *itself* cannot be known for what it is, that is, *in its singularity*. Hostility is therefore the impossibility for bodies that don’t go together to know one another as singular.

Whenever a thing is known in its singularity, it takes leave of the sphere of hostility and thereby becomes a friend—or an enemy.

19. For me, the hostis is a nothing that demands to be annihilated, either through a cessation of hostility, or by ceasing to exist altogether

20. A hostis can be annihilated, but the sphere of hostility itself cannot be reduced to nothing. The imperial humanist who flatters himself by declaring “nothing human is foreign to me” only reminds us how far he had to go to become so foreign to himself.

Today, when "society" is nothing more than a hypothesis, and hardly the most plausible one at that, any claim to defend this society against the supposed fascism lurking in every form of community is nothing more than a rhetorical exercise steeped in bad faith. Who, after all, still speaks of "society" other than the citizens of Empire, who have come or rather *huddled* together against the self-evidence of Empire's final implosion, against the ontological obviousness of civil war?

14. There is no community except in singular relations. *The* community doesn't exist. There is only community, community that circulates.

Gloss α: Community never refers to a collection of bodies conceived independently of their world. It refers to the nature of the relations between these bodies and between these bodies and their world. The moment community tries to incarnate itself in an isolatable subject, in a distinct, separate reality, the moment it tries to materialize the separation between what is inside it and what is outside, it confronts its own impossibility. This point of impossibility is communion. In communion, the complete self-presence of the community coincides with the dissipation of all community within singular relations, and therefore coincides with its tangible absence.

Gloss β: All bodies are in movement. Even when it is immobile, a body still comes into presence, puts into play the world it bears, and follows its fate. Certain bodies *go together*. They tend toward one another, lean on one another: there is community among them. Others flee one another, don't go together, and clash. Within the community of each form-of-life there are also communities of things and gestures, communities of habits and affects, a community of thoughts. It goes without saying that bodies deprived of community also have no *taste*: they do not see that certain things go together, while others do not.

15. There can be no community *of those who are there*.

Friend Nietzsche

"One, is always too many about me"--thinketh the anchorite.
"Always once one--that maketh two in the long run!"

I and me are always too earnestly in conversation: how could it be endured, if there were not a friend?

The friend of the anchorite is always the third one: the third one is the cork which preventeth the conversation of the two sinking into the depth.

Ah! there are too many depths for all anchorites. Therefore, do they long so much for a friend, and for his elevation.

Our faith in others betrayeth wherein we would fain have faith in ourselves. Our longing for a friend is our betrayer.

And often with our love we want merely to overleap envy. And often we attack and make ourselves enemies, to conceal that we are vulnerable.

"Be at least mine enemy!"--thus speaketh the true reverence, which doth not venture to solicit friendship.

If one would have a friend, then must one also be willing to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must be capable of being an enemy.

One ought still to honour the enemy in one's friend. Canst thou go nigh unto thy friend, and not go over to him?

In one's friend one shall have one's best enemy. Thou shalt be closest unto him with thy heart when thou withstandest him.

Thou wouldst wear no raiment before thy friend? It is in honour of thy friend that thou showest thyself to him as thou art? But he wisheth thee to the devil on that account!

He who maketh no secret of himself shocketh: so much reason have ye to fear nakedness! Aye, if ye were Gods, ye could then be ashamed of clothing!

Thou canst not adorn thyself fine enough for thy friend; for thou shalt be unto him an arrow and a longing for the Superman.

Sawest thou ever thy friend asleep--to know how he looketh? What is usually the countenance of thy friend? It is thine own countenance, in a coarse and imperfect mirror.

Sawest thou ever thy friend asleep? Wert thou not dismayed at thy friend looking so? O my friend, man is something that hath to be surpassed.

In divining and keeping silence shall the friend be a master: not everything must thou wish to see. Thy dream shall disclose unto thee what thy friend doeth when awake.

Let thy pity be a divining: to know first if thy friend wanteth pity. Perhaps he loveth in thee the unmoved eye, and the look of eternity.

Let thy pity for thy friend be hid under a hard shell; thou shalt bite out a tooth upon it. Thus will it have delicacy and sweetness.

Art thou pure air and solitude and bread and medicine to thy friend? Many a one cannot loosen his own fetters, but is nevertheless his friend's emancipator.

Art thou a slave? Then thou canst not be a friend. Art thou a tyrant? Then thou canst not have friends.

[. . .]

tell me, ye men, who of you are capable of friendship?
Oh! your poverty, ye men, and your sordidness of soul!

As much as ye give to your friend, will I give even to my foe, and will not have become poorer thereby.

There is comradeship: may there be friendship!

in the early '60s preemptively gave the name "la Violencia" (the Violence) to the historical period they wanted to close out?

12. the point of view of civil war is the point of view of the political.

13. When, at a certain time and place, two bodies affected by the same form-of-life meet, they experience an objective pact, which precedes any decision. They experience *community*.

Gloss: The deprivation of such an experience in the West has caused it to be haunted by the old metaphysical phantasm of the "human community"—also known under the name *Gemeinwesen* by currents working in the wake of Amadeo Bordiga. The Western intellectual is so far removed from any access to a real community that he has to confect this amusing little fetish: the human community. Whether he wears the Nazi-humanist uniform of "human nature" or the hippy rags of anthropology, whether he withdraws into a community whose power has been carefully disembodied, a purely potential community, or dives head-first into the less subtle concept of "total" man—through which all human predicates would be totalized—it is always the same terror that is expressed: the terror of having to think one's singular, determined, *finite* situation; this terror seeks refuge in the reassuring fantasy of totality or earthly unity. The resulting abstraction might be called the multitude, global civil society or the human species. What's important is not the name, but the operation performed. All the recent inanities about the cyber-communist community or the cyber-total man would not have gotten off the ground without a certain strategic opportunity that opened up at the very moment a worldwide movement was forming to refute it. Let's remember that sociology was born at the very moment the most irreconcilable conflict ever witnessed—the class struggle—emerged at the heart of the social, and this discipline was born in the very country where the struggle was most violent, in France in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was born as a response to this struggle.

Gloss α: “Violence” is something new in history. We decadents are the first to know this curious thing: *violence*. Traditional societies knew of theft, blasphemy, parricide, abduction, sacrifice, insults and revenge. Modern States, beyond the dilemma of adjudicating facts, recognized only infractions of the Law and the penalties administered to rectify them. But they certainly knew plenty about foreign wars and, within their borders, the authoritarian disciplining of bodies. In fact, only the timid atom of imperial society—Bloom—thinks of “violence” as a radical and unique evil lurking behind countless masks, an evil which it is so vitally important to identify, in order to eradicate it all the more thoroughly. For us, ultimately, violence is *what has been taken from us*, and today we need to take it back.

When Biopower starts speaking about traffic accidents as “violence on the highways,” we begin to realize that for imperial society the term violence only refers to its own vocation for death. This society has forged this negative concept of violence in order to reject anything within it that might still carry a certain intensity or charge. In an increasingly explicit way, imperial society, in all its details, experiences itself *as violence*. When this society hunts down violence everywhere, it does nothing other than express its own desire to *pass away*.

Gloss β: one finds speaking of civil war repugnant. But when one does it anyway, they assign it a circumscribed place and time. Hence you have the “civil war in France” (1871), in Spain (1936-39), the civil war in Algeria and maybe soon in Europe. At this point one should mention that the French, exhibiting the emasculation that comes so naturally to them, translate the American “Civil War” as “The War of Secession.” They do so to demonstrate their determination to side unconditionally with the victor whenever the victor is also the State. The only way to lose this habit of giving civil war a beginning, end and territorial limit—this habit of making it an exception to the normal order of things rather than considering its infinite metamorphoses in time and space—is to shine a light on the sleight of hand it covers up. Remember how those who wanted to suppress the guerilla war in Columbia

Now, in a situation where the working class has practically disintegrated, the possibility of an expropriation of the means of production no longer exists. So what is the conclusion? The only possible conclusion is that this set of instruments of production we have before us be destroyed. The only possible way is to pass through the dramatic reality of destruction. If the revolution we imagine and which moreover we cannot be certain will ever come about, it will not be the revolution of the past that saw itself as one single event that might even take place in a day or one fine evening but will be a long, tragic, bloody affair that could pass through inconceivably violent, inconceivably tragic processes.

All this is the kind of reality we are moving towards. Not because that is what we desire, not because we like violence, blood, destruction, civil war, death, rape, barbarity. It is not that, but because it is the only plausible road, the road that the transformation wanted by those ruling us and who are in command have made necessary. They have moved on to this road. We cannot change all that with a simple flight of fancy, a simple dream. In the past hypothesis where a strong working class existed, one could fool oneself about this passage and organise accordingly. For example, the organisational proposal of anarcho-syndicalism saw a strong syndicalist movement which, penetrating the working class and organising almost the whole of it, was to bring about this expropriation and passage. This collective subject, who was probably mythical from the start, no longer exists even in its mythical version so what sense would there be in a syndicalist movement of a revolutionary nature? What sense would there be in an anarcho-syndicalist movement? None at all.

So the struggle must begin elsewhere, with other ideas and methods. That is why we have been developing a critique of syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism for about fifteen years. That is why we are, and define ourselves, insurrectionalist anarchists. Not because we think the solution is the barricades—the barricades could be a tragic consequence of choices that are not our own—

but we are insurrectionalists because we think that anarchist action must necessarily face very serious problems. These problems are not desired by anarchism but are imposed by the reality that those in power have built, and we cannot obliterate them simply by wishing them away.

An anarchist organisation that projects itself into the future should therefore be agile. It cannot present itself with the cumbersome characteristics and quantitative heaviness of the structures of the past. It cannot present itself in a dimension of synthesis like organisations of the past where the anarchist structures claimed to sum up reality in 'commissions' that treated all the various problems, making decisions at periodical congresses on the basis of theses that even went back to the last century. All this has seen its day, not because a century has passed since it was thought out, but because reality has changed.

That is why we maintain there is a need for the formation of small groups based on the concept of affinity, even tiny groups made up of very few comrades who know each other and deepen this knowledge because there cannot be affinity if one does not have knowledge of the other. One can only recognise one's affinities by going into the elements that determine one's differences, by frequenting each other. This knowledge is a personal fact, but it is also a question of ideas, debate, discussions. But in relation to the first points we made this evening, if you remember, there can be no going into ideas if there is not also a practice of bringing about actions. So, there is a continual reciprocal process of going into ideas and realising actions.

A small group of comrades, a small group who simply meet in the evening to have a chat would not be an affinity group but a group of friends, pub-mates who meet in the evenings to talk about anything under the sun. On the contrary, a group that meets to discuss things and in discussing prepares itself for doing and through that doing contributes to developing discussion that transforms itself into discussion about things to be done, this is the mechanism of the affinity group. So how then can affinity groups enter into contact with others where the deepened knowledge that exists in the single group does not necessarily exist? This contact

thought, these determinisms are transformed into *rules* which can then be amended. Each sequence of play is bordered, on either edge, by an *event*. The event disorders the play between forms-of-life, introduces a fold within it, suspends past determinisms and inaugurates new ones through which it must be reinterpreted. In all things, we start with and from the middle.

Gloss α: The distance required for the description *as such* of a form-of-life is, precisely, the distance of enmity.

Gloss β: Every attempt to grasp a "people" as a form-of-life—as race, class, ethnicity, or nation—has been undermined by the fact that the ethical differences *within* each "people" have always been greater than the ethical differences between "peoples" themselves.

10. Civil war is the free play of forms-of-life; it is the principle of their coexistence.

11. War, because in each singular play between forms-of-life, the possibility of a fierce confrontation—the possibility of violence—can *never* be discounted.

Civil, because the confrontation between forms-of-life is not like that between States—a coincidence between a population and a territory—but like the confrontation between *parties*, in the sense this word had before the advent of the modern State. And because we must be precise from now on, we should say that forms-of-life confront one another as *partisan war machines*.

Civil war, then, because forms-of-life know no separation between men and women, political existence and bare life, civilians and military; because whoever is neutral *is still a party* to the free play of forms-of-life; because this play between forms-of-life has no beginning or end that can be *declared*, its only possible end being a physical end of the world that precisely no one would be able to declare; and above all because I know of no body that does not get hopelessly carried away in the excessive, and perilous, course of the world.

situation. This concept of freedom forms the most effective antidote against every real freedom. The only substantial freedom is to follow right to the end, to the point where it vanishes, the line along which power grows for a certain form-of-life. This raises our capacity to then be affected by other forms-of-life.

7. A body's persistence in letting a *single* form-of-life affect it, despite the diversity of situations it passes through, depends on its crack. The more a body cracks up—that is, the wider and deeper its crack becomes—the fewer the polarizations compatible with its survival there are, and the more it will tend to recreate situations in which it finds itself involved in its familiar polarizations. The bigger a body's crack grows, the more its absence to the world increases and its penchants dwindle.

Gloss: Form-of-life means therefore that my relation to myself is only one *part* of my relation to the world.

8. The experience one form-of-life has of another is not communicable to the latter, even if it can be translated; and we all know what happens with translations. Only facts can be made clear: behaviors, attitudes, assertions— *gossip*. Forms-of-life do not allow for neutral positions, they offer no safe haven for a universal observer.

Gloss: to be sure, there is no lack of candidates vying to reduce all forms-of-life to the Esperanto of objectified “cultures,” “styles,” “ways of life” and other relativist mysteries. What these wretches are up to is, however, no mystery: they want to make us play the grand, one-dimensional game of identities and differences. This is the expression that the most rabid hostility toward forms-of-life takes.

9. In and of themselves, forms-of-life can be neither said nor described. They can only be shown—each time, in an always singular context. On the other hand, considered locally, the play between them obeys rigorous signifying mechanisms. If they are

can be assured by informal organisation.

But what is an informal organisation? There could be relationships of an informal kind between the various affinity groups that enter into contact with each other in order to exchange ideas and do things together, and consequently the existence of an organisation, also very widespread throughout the country, comprised of even tens, or why not, hundreds of organisations, structures, groups of an informal character based on discussion, periodic analyses, things to be done together, etc. The organisational logic of insurrectional anarchism is different to the organisations we mentioned earlier concerning anarcho-syndicalism. The organisational forms referred to here in a few words merit going into, something I cannot do now in the dimension of a conference. But such a way of organising would, in my opinion, remain simply something within the anarchist movement were it not also to realise relations beyond it, that is through the construction of external groups, external nuclei, also with informal characteristics. These groups should not be composed of anarchists alone, anyone who intends to struggle to reach given objectives, even circumscribed ones, could participate so long as they take a number of essential conditions into account. First of all permanent conflict, that is groups with the characteristic of attacking the reality in which they find themselves without waiting for orders from anywhere else. Then the characteristic of being ‘autonomous’, that is of not depending on or having any relations at all with political parties or trade union organisations. Finally, the characteristic of facing problems one by one and not proposing platforms of generic claims that would inevitably transform themselves into administration along the lines of a mini-party or a small alternative trades union. The summary of these ideas might seem rather abstract and that is why before ending I would like to give an example, because some of these things can be better understood in practice.

A theoretical model of this kind was used in an attempt to prevent the construction of the American missile base in Comiso in the early '80s. The anarchists who intervened for two years built ‘self-managed leagues’. These self-managed leagues were precisely

non-anarchist groups that operated in the area with the unique aim of preventing the construction of the base by destroying the project in the course of realisation.

The leagues were autonomous nuclei characterised by the fact that their only aim was to attack and destroy the base. They did not take on a whole series of problems, because if they had done they would have become groups of syndicalists with the aim of, let us say, defending jobs or finding work or resolving other immediate problems. Instead, their sole aim was to destroy the base. The second characteristic was permanent conflict, i.e., from the moment these groups were formed (they were not specifically anarchist groups, but there were people in them who were anarchists), they went into conflict with all the forces involved in building the base, without this conflict being determined or declared by any representative organism or by the anarchists who had promoted the initiative. The third characteristic was the complete autonomy of these groups, that is to say they did not have links with any parties or unions, etc. The struggle against the base is known in part, and in part not. And I don't know if it is the case to take up the story again here, I just wanted to mention it as an example.

So insurrectionalist anarchism must overcome one essential problem. It must go beyond a certain limit otherwise it will remain no more than the idea of insurrectionalist anarchism. That is the comrades who have lived that insurrection of a personal nature we mentioned earlier, that illumination which produces an idea-force inside us in opposition to the chatter of opinion, and form affinity groups, enter into relationships with comrades from other places through an informal kind of structure, only realise a part of the work. At a certain point they must decide, must go beyond the demarcation line, take a step that it is not easy to turn back from. They must enter into a relationship with people that are not anarchists concerning a problem that is intermediate, circumscribed (such as, for example the destruction of the base in Comiso). No matter how fantastic or interesting this idea might have been it certainly wasn't the realisation of anarchy. What would have happened if one had really managed

"My" form-of-life does not relate to *what* I am, but to how, to the specific *way*, I am what I am. In other words, between a being and its qualities, there is the abyss of its own presence and the singular experience *I* have of it, at a certain place and time. Unfortunately for Empire, the form-of-life animating a body is not to be found in any of its predicates—big, white, crazy, rich, poor, carpenter, arrogant, woman, or French—but in the singular *way* of its presence, in the irreducible event of its being-in-situation. And it is precisely where predication is most violently applied—in the rank domain of morality—that its failure fills us with joy: when, for example, we come across a completely abject being whose *way* of being abject nevertheless touches us in such a way that any repulsion within us is snuffed out, and in this way proves to us that *abjection itself is a quality*.

To embrace a form-of-life means being more faithful to our penchants than to our predicates.

6. Asking why this body is affected by this form-of-life rather than another is as meaningless as asking why there is something rather than nothing. Such a question betrays only a rejection, and sometimes a fear, of undergoing contingency. And, *a fortiori*, a refusal even to acknowledge it.

Gloss α: A better question would be to ask *how* a body takes on substance, how a body becomes *thick*, how it *incorporates* experience. Why do we sometimes undergo heavy polarizations with far-reaching effects, and at other times weak, superficial ones? How can we extract ourselves from this dispersive mass of Bloomesque bodies, from this global Brownian motion where the most vital bodies proceed from one petty abandonment to the next, from one attenuated form-of-life to another, consistently following a principle of prudence—never get carried away, beyond a certain level of intensity? In other words, how could these bodies have become so *transparent*?

Gloss β: The most Bloomesque notion of freedom is the freedom of *choice*, understood as a methodical abstraction from every

In every situation there is one line that stands out among all the others, the line along which *power grows*. Thought is the capacity for singling out and following this line. A form-of-life can be embraced only by following this line, meaning that: *all thought is strategic*.

Gloss: To latecomer's eyes like ours, the conjuring away of every form-of-life seems to be the West's peculiar destiny. Paradoxically, in this civilization that we can no longer claim as our own without consenting to self-liquidation, conjuring away forms-of-life most often appears as a *desire for form*: the search for an archetypal resemblance, an Idea of self placed before or in front of oneself. Admittedly, this *will to identity*, wherever it has been fully expressed, has had the hardest time masking the icy nihilism and the aspiration to nothingness that forms its spine.

But the conjuring away of forms-of-life also has a minor, more cunning form called *consciousness* and, at its highest point, *lucidity*—two “virtues” they prize all the more because these virtues render bodies increasingly powerless. At that point, one starts to call “lucidity” the knowledge of this weakness that offers no way out.

Taking on a form-of-life is completely different from the striving of the consciousness or the will, or from the effects of either.

Actually, to assume a form-of-life is a letting-go, an abandonment. It is at once fall and elevation, a movement and a staying-within-oneself.

5. “My” form-of-life relates not to *what* I am, but to *how* I am what I am.

Gloss: This statement performs a slight shift. A slight shift in the direction of a taking leave of metaphysics. Leaving metaphysics is not a philosophical imperative, but a physiological necessity. Having now reached the endpoint of its deployment, metaphysics gathers itself into a planetary injunction to absence. What Empire demands is not that each conforms to a common law, but that each conforms to its own particular identity. Imperial power depends on the adherence of bodies to their supposed qualities or predicates in order to leverage control over them.

to enter the base and destroy it? I don't know. Probably nothing, possibly everything. I don't know, no one can tell. But the beauty of realising the destructive event is not to be found in its possible consequences.

Anarchists guarantee none of the things they do. They point out the responsibility of persons and structures on the basis of the decision that they are determined to act, and from that moment on they feel sure of themselves because their idea of justice illuminates their action. It points at one person's responsibility, or that of more people, one structure or more structures, and the consequences that such responsibility leads to. It is here that we find anarchists' determination to act.

But once they act along with other people, they must also try to build organisms that are capable of holding together and creating consequences in the struggle against power. We must never forget this. And this is an important point to reflect upon: power realises itself in time and space, it is not something abstract. Control would not be possible if police stations did not exist, if prisons did not exist. Legislative power would not be possible if parliament did not exist, or if there were no little regional parliaments. The cultural power that oppresses us, that fabricates opinion, would not be possible if there were no schools and universities. Now, schools, universities, police stations, prisons, industries, factories, are all things that realise themselves in specific places, in circumscribed areas which we can only move around in if we accept given conditions and play the game. We are here at the moment because we agreed to play the game. We would not have been able to enter the building otherwise. This is interesting. We can use structures of this kind. But at the time of attack such places are forbidden to us. If we were to have come in here with the intent of attacking, the police would obviously have prevented us.

Now, because power realises itself in physical space, anarchists' relation to this is important. Of course insurrection is an individual fact and so in that place deep inside us, at night as we are about to go to sleep, we think ‘... well, in the last analysis things aren't too bad’, one feels at peace with oneself and falls

asleep. There, in that particular place inside us, that private space, we can move about as we please. But then we must transfer ourselves into the physical space of social reality. And physical space, when you think about it, is almost exclusively under the control of power. So, when we move about in this space we carry this value of insurrection with us, these revolutionary values, and measure them in a clash in which we are not the only ones present.

Civil War Tiqqun

*Whoever does not take sides in a civil war
is struck with infamy, and loses all right to politics.
~ Solon, The Constitution of Athens*

1. The elementary human unity is not the *body*—the individual—but the form-of-life.
2. The form-of-life is not *beyond* bare life, it is its intimate polarization.
3. Each body is affected by its form-of-life as if by a clinamen, a leaning, an attraction, a *taste*. A body leans toward whatever leans its way. This goes for each and every situation. Inclinations go both ways.

Gloss: To the inattentive observer, it may seem that Bloom offers a counter example: a body deprived of every penchant and inclination, and immune to all attractions. But on closer inspection, it is clear that Bloom refers less to an absence of taste than to a special *taste for absence*. Only this penchant can account for all the efforts Bloom makes to *persevere* in Bloom, to keep what leans his way at a distance, in order to *decline* all experience. Like the religious, who, unable to oppose *another worldliness* to “this world,” must convert their absence within the world into a critique of worldliness *in general*, Bloom tries to flee from a world that has no outside. In every situation he responds with the same disengagement, each time slipping away from the situation. Bloom is therefore a body distinctively affected by a *proclivity toward nothingness*.

4. This taste, this clinamen, can either be warded off or embraced. To take on a form-of-life is not simply to know a penchant: it means to *think* it. I call *thought* that which converts a form-of-life into a *force*, into a sensible effectivity.